

STATUS MATTERS: DISPARITIES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEGAL AND ILLEGAL
IMMIGRATION POLICIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Arnold Fleischmann)

ABSTRACT

Immigration reform stands as perhaps the most heated domestic issue dating back to the 1980s. The existing literature provides a well-documented foundation on the likely determinants of attitudes towards immigration policy in the U.S. This research extends the analysis to encompass the growing issue of illegal immigration by (1) incorporating recent studies concerning the characteristics of illegal immigrants to focus the analysis on actual demographic trends of the migrant population, and (2) utilizing the 2004 General Social Survey data which allow for a definitive assessment of attitudes with respect to *illegal* immigration policy in contrast to general immigration policy. The thesis seeks to answer the question, Do the determinants of opinion towards immigration policy in general hold for issues of illegal immigration? Similarly, are certain factors more pronounced when addressing illegal immigration? Findings suggest that attitudes towards general versus illegal immigration policies vary in important ways with respect to demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, and political variables.

INDEX WORDS: Immigration, Illegal Immigration, Public Opinion, Policy Reform

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Overview of Recent Reforms	1
Recent Trends in Immigration.....	3
2 THE STATE OF STATE IMMIGRATION POLICIES	8
Increased Activity.....	8
Evidence of Variation in Policy Preferences.....	9
3 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES	13
Immigrant Labor: Supply and Demand.....	14
Immigration's Impact on the Native Workforce	16
Education as an Economic Variable.....	18
Immigration and Perceived Social Threats	20
Regional Preferences and Immigrant Population Trends.....	23
Other Explanatory Variables	24
Party Identification and Ideology	25
Race and Ethnicity.....	26

4	DATA AND METHODS FOR CONTRASTING PREFERENCES	28
	Advantages to Using GSS Data.....	28
	Labor Market Hypothesis.....	31
	Social Threat Hypothesis.....	32
	Regional Hypothesis.....	33
	Political and Demographic Variables.....	35
	Models	37
5	RESULTS	38
6	CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH	47
	Summary of Findings	47
	Exploring Ethnicity, Legal Status, Ideology, and Regions	48
	Implications for Politics and Public Policy	49
	REFERENCES	50
	APPENDICES	57
	A INCOME AND INDUSTRY CODING	55
	B FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR SOCIAL THREAT	56

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Estimates of Illegal Immigration 1980-2005.....	4
Table 2: State Immigration Legislation 2005-2008.....	8
Table 3: Examples of Recent Immigration-Related State Policies.....	11
Table 4: Factor Structure of Spending Policy Preferences.....	36
Table 5: Ordered Logit Regression of Individual Support for Less Restrictive Immigration Policy	38
Table 6: Industry Variable Coding.....	57
Table 7a: Results from Threat Factor Analysis.....	58
Table 7b: Rotated Thread Factor Loadings and Unique Variances.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1a: Legal Permanent Resident Population.....	5
Figure 1b: Period of Entry for Illegal Immigrants	5
Figure 2a: Predicted Probabilities: Party ID and Strongly Agree in Illegal 1 (Hispanic).....	45
Figure 2b: Predicted Probabilities: Party ID and Strongly Disagree in Illegal 1 (Hispanic).....	45
Figure 2c: Predicted Probabilities: Party ID and Strongly Agree in Illegal 1	45
Figure 2d: Predicted Probabilities: Party ID and Strongly Disagree in Illegal 1.....	46

Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview of Recent Reforms

Immigration reform is proving to be one of the most challenging domestic issues confronting U.S. policymakers at the national and state levels. Central to the policy debate is whether current levels of immigration are beneficial or detrimental to the U.S., particularly to geographic and economic subgroups within the population. In the late 1980s, the Reagan administration pushed the Immigration Reform and Control Act through Congress, which extended legal status to about 2.6 million illegal residents. Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, which cut federal welfare funds for most immigrants and ceded prerogative to the states for determining inclusion criteria and benefit levels to immigrants, legal or illegal. In 1994, California voters passed Proposition 187, which denied most public benefits, including education, to illegal aliens. Arizona passed a similar initiative, Proposition 300, in 2006. The proposed Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Act of 2005, which passed in the U.S. House, contained several restrictive measures pertaining to illegal immigration, including penalties for any persons aiding illegal immigrants.¹

Recent legislative battles capture a dichotomous approach to immigration in general that results in very different types of policy. These two strains of policy development can be

¹ The proposed legislation incited pro-immigrant demonstrations in several major U.S. cities. It failed to pass in the Senate.

associated with varying individual outlooks on the costs and benefits of immigration (Borjas 1999). On the one hand, some conceive of immigration as a humanitarian good that the U. S. should pursue at all, or at least several, costs, which incorporates a moral component that does not necessarily work to accommodate the interests of the native population (Card 2005). Alternatively, some take native interests, with respect to positive economic impact, as the primary standard for immigration policy decisions, which leads to more restrictive or at least discriminatory policy preferences (Borjas 1999 and 2003; Söllner 1999).² The latter relies heavily on socioeconomic facts to demonstrate real advantages or disadvantages of particular types of immigrants with respect to skills, wealth, education, and potential for a beneficial contribution to the U.S. When asking the questions, “How many immigrants does the United States want? And which types of immigrants should the country admit?” Borjas argues that the goal should be to maximize the economic well-being of the native population (1999, 5). It seems that this pragmatic framework is best suited to overlay the debate surrounding economic costs and benefits of illegal immigration. Some evidence is presented that suggests humanitarian considerations play an important role in opinions regarding current immigration issues.

As a theoretical point, this paper attempts to shed light on which of these outlooks more closely resembles individual-level policy preferences as expressed in the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS). The analysis tests hypotheses regarding disparities in illegal and general immigration policy preferences. The findings reveal a nuanced approach to immigration policy

² At the municipal level, the distinction is strikingly clear and hotly debated. Several cities, following Hazelton, PA’s example, have instituted unambiguous exclusionary ordinances directed at unauthorized immigrants. Others have taken steps to declare themselves “sanctuary cities” for all immigrants. Fair Immigration Reform Movement provides a database of disparate local ordinances at <http://www.fairimmigration.org/learn/immigration-reform-and-immigrants/local-level/>.

when the particular issue of illegal immigration is raised.³ Demographic characteristics, perceptions of social threat, regional population trends, political affiliation, and economic circumstances have distinctive effects on preferences. The results give valuable insights as to the feasibility and content of eventual reforms.

Recent Trends in Immigration

The bookends of twentieth century American domestic history are periods of large-scale immigration. The century opened with an influx of primarily Western European immigrants hoping to take advantage of opportunities afforded by a strong and expanding U.S. economy. At the turn of the 21st century, similar opportunities continue to attract large numbers, primarily from Latin America and Asia. While the motivations of each group might be comparable, contemporary research on immigration policies takes into account important differences between the two waves, mainly the demographic characteristics and recent unprecedented growth of unauthorized immigration. Relative to the domestic population, recent immigrants are less educated and less skilled than the previous wave, which provides a key contextual framework for any discussion of policy preferences. Research focusing on the effects of immigration includes a broad set of issues: economic performance, social dynamics, infrastructural demands, and national security concerns (Hempstead 2001 and 2007; Kaushal 2005; Smith 2006; Card 2005; Söllner 1999; de la Garza et al. 1991). These issues surface at the local, state, and national levels of policy development and implementation.

Part and parcel with discussions of recent immigration is the issue of illegal immigration. The occasional observer of federal and state political debates would note the primacy of the issue

³ The terms unauthorized, undocumented, and illegal immigrant are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

in recent years. The Pew Hispanic Center (2006a) reports that the majority of Americans perceive illegal immigration to be a “very serious” problem facing the U.S. According to the Department of Homeland Security, between 1980 and 2005, 20.6 million Legal Permanent Residents (LPR) were admitted to the United States (Rytina 2008). Taking naturalizations into account over that time period, 12.1 million LPRs lived in the U.S by 2006. Of the 12.1 million, Rytina estimates that 3.3 million came from Mexico.

The figures on undocumented immigrants are difficult to assess. Table 1 summarizes reports by the Department of Homeland Security (Hoefer et al. 2005) and the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel 2005) that demonstrate the variability in estimates of illegal immigrants. Using Census Current Population Survey and American Community Survey data, the authors derive estimates of unauthorized migrants by calculating the residual of the foreign born population once legal and refugee populations are counted. That being said, the two reports come to similar conclusions as to the size and origins of the unauthorized immigrant population in the past 25 years.

Table 1: Estimates of Illegal Immigration 1980-2005

	Total Illegal Immigrants	Latin America	Mexico
Dept. of Homeland Security (2005)	10.5 million	7.25 million	6 million
Pew Hispanic Center (2005)	10.3 million	8.34 million	5.87 million

Passel (2005, 5) notes that over 85% of these illegal immigrants arrived since 1990.⁴

Figures 1a and 1b break down the numbers of legal and illegal immigrants by period of entry

⁴ Passel qualifies the smaller number for the 1980s saying that the estimates were based on immigrant status as of March 2004. The 1980s may be underrepresented because “many persons who arrived as unauthorized migrants during the 1980s acquired legal status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 or other mechanisms” since they arrived (5).

according to Rytina (2008) and Hoefer et al. (2005). Compared to the LPR figures given above, almost twice as many illegal as legal immigrants from Mexico resided in the U.S. in 2006 (Rytina 2008; Hoefer et al. 2005). To illustrate further the growth of illegal immigration, Passel (2005, 6) notes that the numbers of illegal immigrants entering each year since 1995 exceeded the respective numbers of legal immigrants.

Figure 1a: Legal Permanent Resident Population

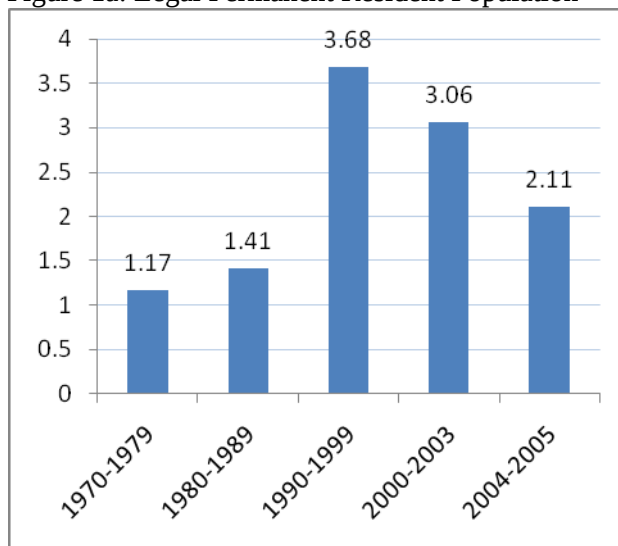
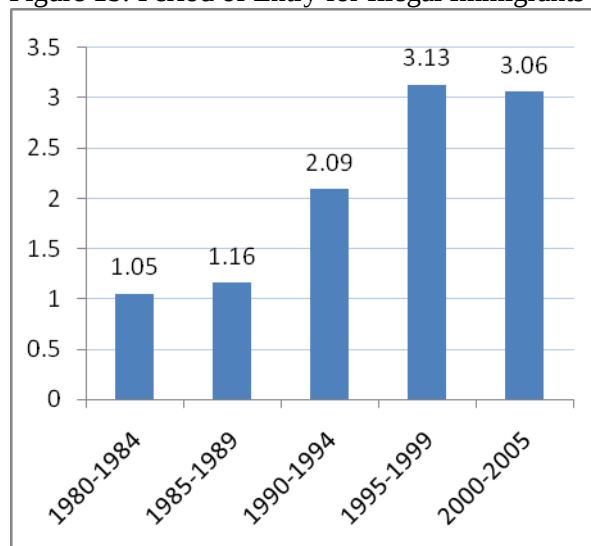


Figure 1b: Period of Entry for Illegal Immigrants



Note: Numbers given in millions. *Source:* Department of Homeland Security (Rytina 2008; Hoefer et al. 2005)

The Pew Hispanic Center (2006b) estimates that nearly half of the unauthorized immigrants entered the country legally through airports, ports, or border crossings where they were subject to inspection by immigration officials. These immigrants overstay their visas or Border Crossing Cards to remain in the country illegally. Slightly more than half of the illegal immigrant population enter and stay in the country illegally (Pew 2006b; see also Warren 1990 for definition and estimates of overstaying trends).

As noted above, increased federal, state, and local action, permissive and restrictive, mirrors immigration trends and intuitively reflects a rise in public demands for such policies. In addition to population studies, much of the literature contrasts the demographic characteristics of unauthorized immigrants with their legal and native counterparts (Passel 2005). Recent illegal immigrants vary a great deal from natives, and even legal immigrants, in terms of educational attainment and labor-related skills. For residents ages 25-64, Passel (2005) estimates almost one third of illegal migrants have less than a ninth grade education, as compared to 2 percent of natives and 15 percent of legal immigrants. Unsurprisingly, the trend continues across the education spectrum to persons having a bachelor's degree or more, where 15 percent of illegal immigrants compare to 30 percent and 32 percent of natives and legal immigrants, respectively (Passel 2005, 23).

In terms of skill level, unauthorized immigrants are heavily concentrated in low-wage, low-education occupations in the agricultural, construction, extractive, and service industries (Passel 2005; Capps et al. 2003). Passel estimates that individual and family incomes for illegal immigrants are almost half those of natives and legal immigrants (2005, 30). Understandably, illegal immigrants trail natives and legal immigrants in their ability to obtain and utilize public goods, which exacerbates the infrastructural impact of illegal immigration at the local and regional levels.

By and large, public opinion research incorporates these demographic and socioeconomic trends as contextual factors for understanding individual preferences regarding immigration policy. There is little research specifically aimed at understanding how similar factors relate to attitudes towards illegal immigration. The theoretical setup of the paper relies on several expectations related to economic circumstances of respondents with respect to illegal immigrant

characteristics. The opinion analysis is prefaced by a discussion of the diverse economic circumstances and groups relevant to the immigration debate. In this vein, Chandler and Tsai (2001) conduct the most recent analysis using GSS data. While their conclusions approximate those of subsequent studies, their use of 1994 survey data begs for a more contemporary analysis of the issue informed by knowledge of recent trends in immigration. Evidence of these trends surfaces in the form of diverse state policies addressing particular contexts of both immigrant presence and public opinion on the issue, particularly as it pertains to illegal immigrants.

Chapter 2

The State of State Immigration Policies

Increased Activity

In the past three years, activity at the state level spiked, with policymakers proposing and enacting legislation in all policy areas, primarily restricting illegal immigrant access to public goods, many times by penalizing those who facilitate unauthorized immigrants. Table 2 gives a numerical overview of the rise in immigration-related legislation introduced in state capitols. Raw numbers presented here do not differentiate between permissive and restrictive policy proposals or enactments, though there is considerable variation among the states in this regard.

Table 2: State Immigration Legislation 2005-2008

	Proposed Bills/Initiatives	Enacted	States Enacting
2005	300	47	25
2006	570	84	32
2007	1562	240	46
2008*	1106	44	26

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures: Immigration Policy Project (Morse et al. 2008 and 2007; Morse 2008)

*As of March 31, 2008

Some argue that states should properly play a larger role in immigration policy development because of the nature of infrastructural costs attributed to immigrants (Skerry 1995). Actions at the state level confirm the validity of theoretical effects of particular socioeconomic environments on policy content and implementation. As demonstrated in Table

2, states are filling a void left by Congress with policies aimed specifically at immigrant access to public benefits, education, and employment. If anything, the variation among state policies in each of these areas with regard to legal and illegal immigrants attests to some state or regional differences in preferences and differences in the demands that recent immigration has exerted on social infrastructures (Urban Institute 2002; Kochar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005). That is, state and local policies exhibit varying strategies for coping with immigration-related issues, which implies that policy preferences vary along these same lines.

In-depth discussion of state-level variation is not included in the current project, but some introduction to the issues is germane to expectations of variation among individual preferences across states. Wells (2004) gives a qualitative assessment of state and local motivations for various immigration policies, explaining why favorable local policies might be instituted in spite of federal policies. She reasons, communities that perceive illegal immigrant contributions to economic and social life as important or worth preserving make efforts to protect them as members of the community. The opposite is also true. Some states and municipalities have taken strong measures to restrict illegal immigrant access to public goods (Urban Institute 2002; see Broder 2007 for state laws restricting access to public benefits and services).⁵

Evidence of Variation in Policy Preferences

Since the PRWORA reform in 1996, states have played a key role in determining the distribution and qualifications for public benefits. Welfare reform instituted a citizenship requirement for federal means-tested benefits, but allowed states to expand eligibility using their own revenue. Hero and Preuhs (2007) find evidence that the size of the immigrant population in

⁵ See also www.fairimmigration.org for database of cities and counties enacting exclusionary and sanctuary policies.

a state has a significant effect on the extension and level of benefits. Local governments take advantage of the ambiguity of a decentralized system of government to pass ordinances which “not only restore to illegal immigrants rights and social services that are denied them at the federal level, but also withdraw from the INS auxiliary personnel, information, and facilities which its agents commonly utilize and from which they benefit” (Wells 2004, 1334). Borjas (1999) presents data showing that immigrant households are more likely to receive welfare benefits than natives. Some of this is due to U.S. policies towards refugees, but he notes, “welfare use is high even among nonrefugee immigrant households” (1999, 109). In a study of state-level immigration and neighbor-state welfare expenditures, Hempstead (2001) attempts to model out-migration of those displaced by immigrants by analyzing effects on neighboring states. Her approach distances the analysis from tangible labor market data and instead relies on the intuitive link between changing public sector demands of neighboring states and immigration trends. Part of her conclusion accounts for why residents of states with little immigration may still hold restrictive policy opinions. Host states are presumed to bear all the costs of immigrants, yet Hempstead’s research suggests that costs for neighboring states may be substantial and underestimated.

Few illegal immigrants are eligible for or receive welfare benefits; even so, several states have implemented laws to this end only recently. The vast majority of undocumented men (90 percent) work (Passel et al. 2004). Contrary to some anti-immigration arguments, Kaushal (2005, 79) demonstrates that access to means-tested programs “had at best a weak effect on the location choices of newly arrived immigrants,” according to immigration data from 1995-1999. The data suggest that negative attitudes towards undocumented immigrants based on the idea that most migrate for welfare benefits are unfounded, though such attitudes may persist.

States are taking initiative in areas of education policy as well. Several states are faced with the growing need for Limited English Proficiency resources in public schools, especially non-traditional immigrant states. Wyoming, Nevada, Oklahoma, to name a few, have passed laws denying illegal immigrants the benefits of in-state tuition and state-sponsored scholarships. Restrictive state labor policies parallel immigrant population trends. A number of states issued some law restricting illegal access to employment, most commonly through restrictions and guidelines for employers. States in the Southeast and Rocky Mountain regions stand out as being most committed to restricting illegal immigrant access to employment. Table 3 summarizes examples of recent policies enacted in various states.

Table 3: Examples of Recent Immigration Related State Policies

Public Benefits	VA HB1798/SB 1143 (2005)	Prohibits unauthorized immigrants from receiving state or local public benefits
	AZ SB 1137 (2006)	Limits eligibility for the Comprehensive Care for the Elderly program to citizens and those with legal alien status
	IN SB 504 (2007)	Sets requirements for qualified aliens for TANF and requires verification of legal residence
Education	WY SB 85 (2006)	Bars non-citizens and non-Legal Permanent Residents from receiving scholarship funding created in the bill
	OK SB 820 (2007)	Requires United States citizenship or lawful presence for the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program
	NV SB 5 (2007)	Requires 2 years of legal residence in the state to be eligible for a state millennium scholarship
Labor	CO HB 1343 (2006)	Prohibits state agencies from contracting with businesses that employ illegal immigrants and requires contractor verification of legal work status of all employees
	AR HB 1024 (2007)	Prohibits state agencies from contracting with businesses that employ illegal immigrants
	TN HB 729 (2007)	Provides for administrative procedures against employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, including temporary suspension of the employer's business license

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures: Immigration Policy Project (www.ncsl.org/programs/immig)

This brief account of state policies specifically addressing the issue of illegal immigration underlies the need for contemporary analysis of determinants of individual preferences towards illegal immigration policy.

Chapter 3

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Research on illegal immigration parallels the policy debates surrounding the issue. From strictly economic analyses to individual opinion research, every author attempts to shed light on the impact and integration of immigrants at the national, state, or municipal level. The recent immigrant trends require policy innovation and reform at all levels of government to meet new demands on education, labor, and social services. The economic impact of immigration, in terms of large-scale and localized costs and benefits, is the most prominent area for research. Part and parcel with demands on the labor market is a host of research dealing with socioeconomic effects related to group threat and group conflict. Many of these effects are manifest in regional, state, and local policy differences and among several demographic subgroups. The following discussion takes into account economic and opinion research in order to justify the particular set of variables used in this analysis.

A summary of the literature regarding the economic impact of immigration can be broken down into two complementary areas of study, both of which are important for developing a theory of immigration policy preferences. One deals with the actual impact of immigration on the labor market, from a purely economic point of view, which logically prefaces a discussion of how people perceive the impact. The other builds on demonstrated economic effects, focusing on the theoretical connection between attitudes and economic circumstances. The following section lays out important economic perspectives and characteristics of groups relevant to the

immigration debate. While many researchers deal with the broad issue of immigration, the population statistics outlined in the introduction invite economic analyses that contextualize expectations of attitudes towards *illegal* immigration. The undocumented immigrant component is central to the economic debate as demonstrated in dissimilar attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants (Chandler and Tsai 2001). The key question relevant to the overall economic discussion is whether or not respondents focus on “the perspective that stresses the bottom line,” as Borjas advocates should be the case (1999, 113). Most of the existing research offers evidence that individuals do take economic circumstances into account and suggests that variation of individual preferences, with respect to economic determinants, is the result of as many interpretations of the bottom line (Citrin et al. 1997; Scheve and Slaughter 1999; Söllner 1999).

Immigrant Labor: Supply and Demand

Economists rely on accurate descriptions of the characteristics of incoming workers in order to draw conclusions on the probable effects of immigrant labor, that is, in projecting who might benefit from their labor and who might suffer as a result of labor market competition. After identifying the important economic characteristics of immigrant groups, research can be directed at economic sectors and parties where effects should be manifest. A major element in immigration research is the comparison between immigrant waves at the beginning and end of the 20th century (Borjas 1999; Simon and Lynch 1999; Smith 2006). Some qualifications should be made when drawing on the vast U.S. history of the immigrant experience in order to predict or anticipate contemporary circumstances. Those optimistic about the eventual success of recent immigrants based on the gains of previous immigrants are not taking everything into

consideration. The national origin of recent immigrants can be shown to affect economic performance and skill level, yet the larger determinant of skill level appears to be legal status (Smith 2006).⁶ Latino immigrants, especially illegal, “trail the native-born by about 4 years of schooling on average,” while Asian and European immigrants have higher educational attainments on average (Smith 2006, 230). The new wave of immigrants is increasingly less skilled and less educated than previous waves, which is due to the relative advances in education and opportunity on the native side (Borjas 1999; Card 2005; Smith 2006; Capps et al. 2007). Using census data from 1960 to 2000, Borjas demonstrates that “the immigrants who had just entered the country in 1960 were slightly less likely to be high school dropouts [though by] 1998, the newest immigrants were almost four times more likely to be high school dropouts” (1999, 27).

Immigrants account for a disproportionate share of low-wage, low-skill labor (Urban Institute 2002). Though immigrants only make up 11 percent of the population, they comprise about 15 percent of all workers, 20 percent of low-wage workers, and almost half of workers without a high school education (Capps et al. 2003; Capps et al. 2007; see also Passel 2005).⁷ More importantly for the purposes of this study, illegal immigrants make up about half of the low-skilled workers in the immigrant group and about one quarter of all low-skilled workers, and the numbers are growing. Capps et al. (2007, 4) report that the size of the unauthorized immigrant working population increased by 30 percent from 2000 to 2005. In addition to these

⁶ A discussion of the causal effects of nationality on economic performance and skill level would be well suited for a comparative paper of international proportions. The point is made here with reliable research connecting trends of economic performance and skill levels with particular countries of origin.

⁷ In both of Capps’s studies, low-wage was determined as 200 percent of minimum wage, about \$10.30. One would expect the share of unauthorized, low-wage, low-skill workers to be higher with lower wage criteria.

statistics, Smith (2006, 215-216) estimates that illegal immigrants earn about 60 percent of what legal migrants earn, based primarily on educational disparities and ethnic characteristics. In terms of policy preferences, the expected effect of wage and skill competition between the native population and its immigrant counterpart is that natives who perceive an economic threat will be more likely to prefer restrictive policies, particularly those that might curb illegal immigration. Conversely, those who might benefit from the supply of inexpensive labor would have positive views towards permissive policies for immigrant labor.

The demand for immigrant labor is the unremarkable result of a steady period of economic growth coupled with global competition in food and manufacturing industries. Growth in the construction and service sectors of the U.S. economy, as well as competitive innovations in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, are largely responsible for accommodating immigrant labor flows. From 2000 to 2005, “the number and share of immigrants, especially the unauthorized, increased most rapidly in low-wage, lower-skilled jobs in key areas of the economy, such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and services” (Capps et al. 2007, 1). Immigrants are overrepresented in six major occupational categories: agriculture, fishing, and forestry; construction; maintenance; manufacturing (production); food services; and installation, maintenance, and repair (Capps et al. 2007, 7; Passel 2005, 27-29; based on industry categorization by the U.S. Census Bureau). Expectations can be formed based on these industry characteristics regarding the groups immediately affected by immigrant labor.

Immigration’s Impact on the Native Workforce

Intuitively, the abundance of competitive workers should have some market effect on native workers. As several economists and pro-immigration advocates admit, pinpointing the

real wage and employment effects of immigrant labor on the native market is a difficult task (Card 2005; Borjas 2003; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). According to opinion research, attitudes of competing groups towards one another are shaped by their economic environments, whether explicit in actions or not (Gay 2006). Many argue that the intuitive expectations are legitimate – immigrants will compete with their low-wage, low-skill native counterparts, and natives will lose out through depressed wages or job loss (Söllner 1999; Borjas 1999; Card 2005). Indeed, immigration from 1980 to 2000 depressed the average native worker's wage by 3.2 percent according to Borjas's (2003, 1370) calculations, with the most dramatic effects experienced by high school dropouts.

Immigrants do affect the wage structure of local labor markets, but the effects are not as obvious as might be expected because of migration among native workers. Most often, theories aimed at identifying labor market effects are restricted to local or state economies. Hempstead (2001) argues that there are observable effects of immigration-induced native migration, which are manifest in neighboring state redistributive expenditures. She demonstrates that neighbors of high immigration states spend increasingly more on redistributive services, which arguably confirms the displacement theory. Borjas (1999, 83) suggests that because state and local economies are not closed systems, many of the studies that deal with labor market effects fail to account for diffusion of immigration effects: "Because natives respond to changes in the economic environment, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to detect the impact of immigration by looking at economic conditions in the local areas hardest hit."⁸ Card (2005, 307, 321) explicitly disagrees with Borjas, noting that "immigration has a powerful effect on local labor

⁸ Borjas (2001) later adjusts his argument, conceding that the labor market is not entirely fluid. The cost of moving within such a large market as the U.S would persuade many natives to stay put.

markets,” but “local labor market outcomes of low skilled natives are not much affected by these relative supply shocks.” He demonstrates his point by regressing data regarding low-wage and low-skill natives on the corresponding data for immigrants in several U.S. cities. The results suggest that the two are uncorrelated on both counts, that is, native migration does not offset the immediate and localized effects of labor competition in terms of wage or skill level (Card 2005). Some opinion literature supports Card’s conclusions. In their study of southern California, Espenshade and Calhoun (1993) demonstrate that there is only a weak connection between labor market competition and attitudes towards illegal immigrants.

Within the native population, effects vary among social and demographic groups with respect to economic status. The benefits of immigrant labor, as one might expect, accrue disproportionately to the owners of capital. For this reason, several arguments lauding the economic benefits of low-cost immigrant labor misrepresent the fact that such practices are entirely beneficial. A more accurate assessment, as Borjas demonstrates, is that low-cost immigrant labor “shifted income away from less-skilled natives toward highly skilled natives and owners of capital” (1999, 103). Söllner (1999) reiterates and extends the point by challenging whether moral obligations or economic self-interest is the root of opinions towards immigration. He concludes that economic circumstances are the best explanation of policy preferences on the matter. Much like the expectations above, attitudes towards illegal immigration should be heavily dependent on economic status as operationalized by respondents’ industry and income.

Education as an Economic Variable

Education is a multipurpose variable in the literature. Educational attainment sometimes serves as a proxy for skill level and is interpreted as theoretically relevant for economic reasons

(Borjas 1999). It also serves as a theoretical determinant of acceptance, that is, the more educated people are, the more favorable opinions they should have of immigration by virtue of some liberal or progressive mechanism associated with higher levels of education (Hood and Morris 1998; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Haubert and Fussell 2006; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). On a similar note, a few authors include measures of cosmopolitanism that capture respondents' positive attitudes toward immigration (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Chandler and Tsai 2001) and immigrants (Haubert and Fussell 2006). The concept serves as a proxy for exposure and acceptance of other cultures – the alternative to ethnocentrism. In every case, higher levels of education correlate with positive attitudes towards immigrants.

In an economic sense, level of education serves as an indication of whether the individual labor market opportunities may be jeopardized by illegal immigrants. That is, one does not expect an individual with a college or advanced degree to feel threatened by the prospect of competing for work with an *illegal* immigrant counterpart. Scheve and Slaughter (2001) demonstrate the importance of education as an economic proxy for skill-level connected to individual opinions towards general levels of immigration. Lower skill levels, operationalized by level of education, are expected to heighten negative immigration policy preferences, specifically with regard to illegal immigration policy.

Respondents' opinions towards immigration with respect to economic status or outlook should reflect several of the points made above. There is little consensus in the literature on what level of economic circumstances dictates attitudes towards immigration. Individuals who perceive direct economic threats from immigrants, such as the unemployed, less educated, low-skilled, and low-wage earners are more likely to express negative attitudes towards levels of immigration (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Scheve and Slaughter 1999; Chandler and Tsai

2001), if not towards the immigrants themselves. Even still, Citrin et al. (1997) conclude that individual economic circumstance does not have a significant effect on attitudes towards levels of immigration. In some cases, individual perception of the national economy leads to restrictionist or positive preferences towards levels of immigration (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Using 1994 NES data, Citrin et al. (1997) argue that individual-level economic circumstances do not affect individual preferences for the level of immigration; rather, national retrospective evaluations matter. The general conclusion from this set of research is that individual perceptions of economic outlook, at several levels, are related to perceptions of immigration generally.

H₁: Native groups that compete economically with their immigrant counterparts will be more likely to favor more exclusive policies for illegal immigrants. Conversely, those who are not likely to compete with illegal immigrants will be less likely to favor exclusionary policies.

Immigration and Perceived Social Threats

The economic determinants of policy preferences are also informed by theories of group interaction and conflict (Levine and Campbell 1972). Key's (1984) work touches on political and social threat when dealing with relations between whites and blacks in the South. The topic has since been expanded to several combinations of other ethnic, social, and political groups. Taking into account varying levels of contact and competition among dissimilar groups, researchers attempt to identify the most important determinants of individual opinion towards other groups – individual and group contact (Hood and Morris 1998; McLaren 2003), economic environments (Gay 2006), cosmopolitan worldview (Haubert and Fussell 2006), ethnic affinity

(de la Garza 1991; Simon and Lynch 1999), religious affiliation (Campbell 2006), and social environments (Key 1984; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). In the area of material goods like food and housing, negative attitudes towards an outgroup competitor are attributed to “fear of displacement or loss due to the advancement” of the competing group (Gay 2006, 983).

Hood and Morris (1998) apply the social conflict theory to a study of Anglo opinion toward immigration, taking into account the context of documented and undocumented populations in an area. The paper focuses on change in the size of principal populations as the catalyst for opinion formation. They set out to test whether a “contact hypothesis” – intergroup contact reduces intergroup conflict – or a “realistic group conflict hypothesis” – proximity of competing groups will increase conflict over scarce resources – is most applicable to opinions on immigration (1998, 3; see also Levine and Campbell 1972, chapter 3). Their findings are twofold. In the case of legal migrants, increases in the documented migrant population reduce “aversion to increased legal immigration,” confirming the contact hypothesis (Hood and Morris 1998, 7). The opposite holds for undocumented migrants: “as the relative size of the undocumented migrant population increases, Anglo discontent with increased immigration also increases” – confirming the group conflict hypothesis (7). The wording of the results quoted here exemplifies the problem of ambiguity that arises when relying on “increase, decrease, or stay the same” survey items. All of these studies manifest discrepancies in immigration opinions with respect to legal or illegal immigrants; yet, the primary survey item used for analysis in much of the literature does not differentiate between the two groups of immigrants.

The findings regarding group conflict support research by de la Garza et al. (1991) in what might be considered a critical case study. Their primary finding that, “contact with undocumented persons diminishes support for immigration policy favorable to Mexican

immigrants,” suggests that demographic similarities and group contact matter for opinion formation (de la Garza et al. 1991, 384; see also Suro 2005; Hood et al. 1997). For this reason, ethnic identity, i.e., Hispanic, should reduce the likelihood that a respondent might feel threatened. The focus on Hispanic as the most salient ethnic identity informing opinions towards illegal immigrants is supported by all of the immigration estimates given in the introduction. In a 2005 Pew Hispanic report, Suro demonstrates that Hispanics are by and large supportive of immigrant interests. While overwhelmingly positive (68% versus 23%), the favorable opinions of illegal immigration are not unanimous among Latinos, and even less so among native-born Hispanics (55% say they help the US economy, 34% say they hurt the US economy) (Suro 2005, 3).

The literature on social threat is not limited to resource-based threats. Some expand the concept of threat from purely economic and self-interested threats to cultural threats (Chandler and Tsai 2001). This may be more properly described as perceived threats from a “crosscutting loyalty structure” (Levine and Campbell 1972). Huddy and Sears (1995) frame the threat as symbolic racism evidenced in opposition to bilingual education policies. The fact that, in the midst of the recent immigration wave, most states have enacted some form of Official English legislation is telling as to the salience and applicability of cultural threat theories (Schildkraut 2003). Supporters of such policies argue, “both historical experience and common sense teach that linguistic diversity threatens political cohesion and stability” (Citrin et al. 1990, 538).⁹ Respondents may be upset by the ambiguity of immigrant loyalties and reluctance to assimilate, which would encourage minor or even wholesale opposition to immigration.

⁹ See ProEnglish.org for information on state policies and the advocacy arguments for preserving American culture, i.e. they voice opposition to bilingual education and bilingual ballots as well. In citing this resource, the author does not imply that he ascribes to the policy views expressed on the website.

Perceived security threats are a potential source for exclusionary policies. The notorious (or exemplary) Illegal Immigration Relief Act Ordinance of Hazelton, Pennsylvania originated in response to two high-profile crimes committed by illegal immigrants (Issadore 2007; Parlow 2007). In the case of Western Europe's current struggles to address immigration, McLaren (2003) demonstrates that individual perception of both resource and cultural threats leads to exclusionary policy preferences. Relying heavily on the U.S. experience and theories of social conflict, her research demonstrates that increased levels of minority immigrant groups increase the level of perceived threat, but the relationship is tempered by personal closeness with minority groups (McLaren 2003, 927). Simon and Lynch (1999) suggest that cultural affinity with immigrant groups leads to more favorable opinions.

H₂: Respondents who associate social threats with immigrants will be more likely to favor exclusionary policies, but ethnic similarities between respondents and immigrant groups will reduce the effect of perceived threats.

Regional Preferences and Immigrant Population Trends

Contemporary research on immigration preferences emphasizes the importance of undocumented immigration as a more controversial element in the debate. Reports by the Pew Hispanic Center, the Brookings Institution, and the Urban Institute attempt to track the demographic changes brought about by new immigration. These resources can be used to describe more detailed demographic contexts for preference formation on the issue. As outlined above, recent trends suggest that immigrants, legal and illegal, respond to regional economic opportunities (Hempstead 2007). Most of the literature thus far has not taken into account the

unique geographic context that may influence attitudes toward immigrants, which seems to fit well with theories of group contact and conflict.

When region is incorporated, it is seldom accompanied by sufficient theory; it often serves as a requisite control variable (Haubert and Fussell 2006). In the case of Haubert and Fussell (2006), a regional control was proposed for attitudes towards an unspecified group of immigrants. In the full model, none of the four regions (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West) was found to be significant. Evidence suggests that immigrants “grease the wheels of the labor market,” in terms of lowering interstate wage differentials by moving to the most advantageous regions. Compared with the high cost for natives to pick up and move to different regions, “newly arrived immigrants in the United States are a self-selected sample of persons who have chosen to bear the fixed cost of the geographic move” (Borjas 2001, 71). Documented trends show that foreign-born migrants are moving from traditional gateway states to new settlement states in the Southeast and Rocky Mountain regions, primarily for economic opportunities (Hempstead 2007, 467; Urban Institute 2002; Passel et al. 2004; Singer 2004; Kochar et al. 2005). Attitudes towards immigrants should vary at the region and state levels in response to fluctuations in the migrant population.

H₃: Regional contexts affect policy preferences. Specifically, respondents in areas with larger shares of illegal immigrants as a proportion of total foreign born, will be more likely to favor more exclusionary policies.

Other Explanatory Variables

Several variables are included in the analysis to account for political and demographic differences among respondents. No hypotheses are built around these political and demographic

characteristics. The particular expectations for these variables rely on the intuitive expectations discussed in the literature. Republican partisan identification and conservative ideology scores are expected to correspond with restrictive policy preferences. Similarly, the effects of racial identity with respect to resource competition are expected to be visible in restrictive preferences by blacks. As for ethnicity, Hispanics are expected to have permissive preferences regarding immigration.

Party Identification and Ideology

Self-identified partisan affiliation and/or ideological identification have been shown to predict attitudes towards immigration. Republicans/conservatives are associated with more restrictive or exclusionary policy preferences, while Democrat/liberal affiliation is often shown to exhibit more favorable preferences toward immigrants (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Hood and Morris 1998; Scheve and Slaughter 1999; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Haubert and Fussell 2006; Hero and Preuhs 2007). Most of these studies confirm intuitive expectations.

There is certainly room for argument when considering why these associations should be so. How do partisan stereotypes relate to the costs or benefits of immigration? If the effect of increased legal and illegal immigration is truly redistributive, in terms of capital as Borjas (1999) suggests, then one would expect the business-owning portion of the Republican base to be pro-immigrant. Within the same business dynamic, native low-skill, low-wage workers suffer as a result of competitive immigrant labor. Democrats historically appeal to a working-class constituency, which suggests that Democrats would take a restrictive approach to immigration in order to protect the interests of their constituency. Conversely, matters of national security, like

border control, are often associated with conservatives (i.e., the controversial Minutemen Border Patrol), leading to the expectation that Republicans favor restrictive immigration policies. On the other side of the aisle, liberal emphasis on civil rights and liberties and provision of social benefits fits logically into pro-immigrant policy agendas. Citrin et al. (1997, 868) address this ambiguity in their research, demonstrating that ideological self-description is “more closely aligned with policy preferences,” while party identification is only weakly connected with immigration policy preferences.

Race and Ethnicity

Attitudes vary along racial and ethnic lines as well. Group conflict theory primarily focuses on conflicts over resources, but the groups themselves are most often defined along racial or ethnic lines. Some argue that blacks suffer proportionately more due to low-skill immigration than whites. Rodriguez (1999) attributes conflicts between African-American and immigrant groups to group interactions in housing and education and competition in the labor market. Comparing education and skill levels, blacks and immigrants are more similar than whites and immigrants; therefore, “any adverse impact of immigration on competing workers will fall hardest on the population of native-born African Americans” (Borjas 1999, 93). Expectations of conflict between Latino and black populations in major metropolitan areas are confirmed by Gay (2006) and attributed to the economic environment in which the two groups interact. Contrary to this expectation, Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) demonstrate that blacks, as well as Asians, are significantly more likely than non-Hispanic whites to favor increased levels of immigration; though, they expected the racial conflict hypothesis to be

confirmed. Chandler and Tsai (2001) do not find race to be a significant factor in attitudes toward immigration.

Similarly, de la Garza et al. (1991) show that those who have a closer ethnic affiliation with Mexico are more likely to support favorable policies towards legal and illegal immigrants. Sanchez (2008) addresses the important issue of the potential for a Latino/African American alliance on issues relevant to both groups. While his project deals exclusively with Latino perceptions of African Americans, Sanchez (2008) notes the conflictual history between the two groups. The literature does not provide any conclusive evidence on the effects of race or ethnicity alone as a significant determinant of attitudes towards immigrants. When racial characteristics do seem to matter, there is some theoretical connection to economic contexts (Gay 2006; Borjas 1999; Johnson et al. 1999).

This research project builds on the literature above to demonstrate the force of such demographic, economic, and social circumstances on attitudes towards illegal immigration. Using individual-level data, this study will provide a useful comparison between attitudes towards general immigration policy and those regarding illegal immigration policy.

Chapter 4

Data and Methods for Contrasting Immigration Policy Preferences

Advantages to Using GSS Data

The 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) contrasts questions relating to legal and illegal immigration. Most of the literature reviewed above uses an all-inclusive question regarding immigration policy to sort out the effects of socioeconomic contexts on preferences. In the National Election Studies (NES), the GSS, and several news agency polls, respondents are asked whether immigration should be increased, decreased, or kept the same. Depending on the goal of the research, the question does provide ample information to assess the state of immigration preferences in the country, but offers little insight on attitudes towards policy dealing exclusively with illegal immigration.

There remains some ambiguity in studies that purport to draw conclusions concerning attitudes towards unauthorized immigration, or completely legal immigration for that matter, using the primary NES or GSS question. The term immigrant encompasses legal permanent residents (LPR), naturalized citizens (former LPRs), temporary legal residents, refugees, and unauthorized migrants. Respondents may assume the question relates only to official, authorized levels of immigration. They may have only illegal immigration in mind, or they may take into account both immigrant populations. In any of the three cases, the survey data taken as a whole do not allow for particular hypotheses to be tested on this very important component of the larger issue. The most that might be derived from the data is a picture of determinants for preferences on immigration policy generally. To assess individual perceptions of undocumented immigrants,

survey questions must be framed to overcome ambiguity. The question specifically addressing the exclusion of illegal immigrants in the GSS provides an opportunity to test and draw conclusions on the determinants of public opinion towards the specific area of illegal immigration policy.

The GSS asks respondents their level of agreement (5-point scale) with the statement “America should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants.” The question explicitly captures preferences regarding illegal immigration. The item helps to isolate the effects of economic and non-economic contexts for opinions toward illegal immigration, which can be distinguished from previous research in two ways. Research based on analysis of “increased, decreased, or kept the same” questions does not allow for explicit conclusions regarding attitudes towards illegal immigration. Unlike Chandler and Tsai (2001), who use a set of illegal-immigration-related questions to derive a factor score for opinions toward illegal immigration, this project analyzes opinions towards the central aspect of illegal immigration policy – exclusion. Responses to this question are the dependent variable in two models discussed below. Two other models use the general immigration item, which asks respondents whether levels of immigration should be increased, decreased, or kept the same on a 5-point scale.¹⁰ Responses to the immigration items have a correlation coefficient of 0.38, which gives some evidence that respondents discriminate between particular areas of immigration policy. The analysis presented below attempts to account for the discrepancies in opinions.

There may be some doubt as to the comparability of responses for the two immigration items. The first deals with excluding illegal immigrants, the other deals with acceptable levels of

¹⁰ The responses were reordered such that a lower response can be interpreted as a negative attitude in either case. With regard to interpreting the coefficients, a negative sign suggests that the variable relates to negative immigration preferences.

immigration. In response to one aspect of comparability, the legal context surrounding illegal immigration makes it difficult to imagine a question that would allow respondents to circumvent the unlawful element. That is, responses to an item framed in the same way as the general immigration question, asking whether illegal immigration levels should increase, decrease, or stay the same, would probably be skewed by the fact that a positive answer condones illegal behavior. Alternatively, the degree to which the government should work to exclude illegal immigrants does not put respondents in a position to condone illegal activity. The causal link between excluding illegal immigrants and levels of illegal immigration is a logical and sufficient reason for the choice of these two items as expressions of similar policy options – one for illegal immigration levels, the other for general immigration levels.

Another issue of comparability regards the interpretation of the two survey items along the 5-point scale. There may be an underlying, latent scale for each question that is not directly comparable to other. For example, the difference between the disagree and disagree strongly response with respect to excluding illegal immigrants may not be the same as the same ordinal difference with respect to the general immigration question. The moderate, positive correlation between the two questions leaves the comparability question open for argument, but it also suggests that there is some evidence that the two are comparable. The issue of correlation gets to the heart of this research. In addition to the potential latent scale problem, the present analysis attempts to demonstrate that respondents think differently about the issues, which explains why responses might vary between the two items.

Labor Market Hypothesis

The labor market hypothesis (H_1) combines several economic-related characteristics about the individual respondents to explain exclusionary preferences. A set of variables is used to test the component parts of the hypothesis. The first element, income, is broken down into three ranges based on respondent's household income (*Low*, *Middle*, and *High*). Lower income levels, inasmuch as they reflect individuals who may be threatened by or compete with immigrants for low-wage jobs, should predict support for exclusionary policies (see Appendix A for coding criteria).¹¹

The second element of H_1 involves low-skill threats. Measures of skill level vary within the literature. Real wages (Borjas 1999) and education level (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) are the prominent options. Whether it is defined as a labor market similarity or represents material vulnerability (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000), education is theoretically viable as a measure of skill level. The measure of education is composed of a series of dummy variables representing the highest level of schooling completed: less than high school, high school and junior college, and college or greater. The downside to using education as an economic indicator is the potential conflation of education as skill level or education as some measure of cosmopolitan or progressive sensibility (Hood and Morris 1998; Haubert and Fussel 2006; Hero and Preuhs 2007). The difficulty here is not resolved in the literature, but in defense of the

¹¹ The survey also provides income of the individual in constant dollars. Household income was more appealing for two reasons, one practical, and the other mildly theoretical. More respondents offered household income than individual income, which meant preserving more cases. Secondly, households with low incomes, even if the income derives from more than one member (especially if the income derives from more than one member), should still comport with the assumption that someone close to the respondent, if not the respondent himself, would be threatened by low-wage labor market competition.

present application of education level, the relationship between level of schooling and labor market prospects is the more intuitive of the two.

The third element of H_1 regards the effect of working in a particular economic sector on immigration preferences. Illegal immigrants are most likely to compete for jobs in blue-collar and service industries, as opposed to white collar. Within the set of blue-collar jobs, agricultural and construction sectors are prominent employers of illegal immigrants. Four industry variables (*White Collar*, *Blue Collar*, *Service*, and *Agricultural/Construction*) are included in the model (see Appendix A for coding criteria).

Social Threat Hypothesis

Hypothesis H_2 requires some measure of perceived threat. The 2004 GSS includes a series of questions that gauge individual opinions on the impact of immigration on jobs, crime, and more generally, whether immigrants are good for America and improve American society. Respondents were asked whether they agree with the statements that (1) immigrants take away jobs, (2) immigrants increase crime rates, (3) immigrants are good for America, and (4) immigrants improve American society. These questions are jointly operationalized using factor analysis to represent economic, physical, and cultural threats that influence attitudes towards illegal immigrants. It should be noted that the questions do not specifically ask for opinions towards illegal immigrants. Using principal components factor analysis, the *Threat Factor* variable was created. The variables score high on a single factor, which is interpreted as immigration-related threat illustrated in Tables 7a-b in Appendix B. Higher scores on the threat variable should be associated with more exclusionary preferences. In addition to the threat variable, an interaction is suggested by the second hypothesis regarding the effect of ethnic

similarity on perception of threat. In the analysis, *Hispanic-Threat Interaction* demonstrates the positive effect of ethnic closeness on immigration preferences with respect to perceived threat.

Regional Hypothesis

Hypothesis H₃ states that attitudes toward immigration policy will reflect the migration trends in the particular state and region. As Wells (2004) suggests, state-level opinion data would be optimal for comparing opinions with respect to emerging or enacted state immigration policies. Ideally, incorporating a variable that captures these trends for groups of states or each individual state would help to pinpoint the geographic effect of immigrant settlement. The Current Population Survey provides annual estimates of foreign born and change in foreign born for each state. These data might be used to demonstrate the effect of total immigration on attitudes towards policy with respect to each state, but it would not isolate changes in the illegal population. Major border or coastal states (California, Texas, Florida, New York, and New Jersey) are included in discussions of gateway states. Surprisingly, a gateway state dummy is not found in most of the opinion literature, perhaps due to similar omissions in the respective datasets. Limitations in the 2004 GSS dataset prevent the inclusion of such a variable in this analysis.

More appropriate to this paper, Passel (2005) estimates the shares of the undocumented immigrant population as a percentage of foreign born in 2002-2004. The report breaks the states into categories where undocumented immigrants make up 40-54% (22 states), 30-39% (10 states), 20-29% (16 states), and < 20% (8 states) of all foreign born, with respect to each state.¹²

¹² Passel also names 8 states the “very highest” category where unauthorized immigrants compose 48-54% of the total foreign born population in the state. It should be noted that California and New York, the two largest

This project draws on Passel’s categorization to substantiate the group contact and conflict theories’ applicability to regional variables.

Absent more exact information on the residence of respondents, the analysis may nevertheless benefit from regional data included in the survey. The GSS codes each respondent as being from one of nine regions: New England, Mid-Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific.¹³ While this is not optimal for isolating regional trends, each of the regions corresponds well with the classifications made by Passel (2005). For example, all but two of the states in the Mountain region fall into the “Highest % Unauthorized” category. Even so, Wyoming is classified in the “High” category. Montana stands as the only inconsistent state when discussing the expected effect of this region on attitudes towards illegal immigration. If anything, the inclusion of Montana in this region should make the effects of the variable harder to detect. The New England and Mid-Atlantic regions present the opposite case. All of the states in these regions are classified by Passel in the “Lower” or “Lowest” categories. Dummy variables are used for each region, with New England serving as the baseline category.

destinations for immigrants, fall into the 20-29% and < 20% groups, respectively, which further emphasizes the point that illegal immigration is not entirely captured by studies focused on traditional immigration settlements.

¹³ The states making up each region are **New England** – Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island; **Mid Atlantic** – New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania; **E.N. Central** – Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio; **W.N. Central** – Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas; **S. Atlantic** – Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, DC; **E.S. Central** – Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi; **W.S. Central** – Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas; **Mountain** – Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico; **Pacific** – Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawai’i

Political and Demographic Variables

In addition to variables specifically related to the three hypotheses, several variables are included to control for demographic and political characteristics discussed above. Political and ideological affiliations are prominent fixtures in immigration policy research. *Party ID* is derived from the GSS item asking respondents to place themselves on a 7-point party identification scale. There are no distinct expectations for independents. In as much as they fall between Democrats and Republicans on the scale, independents' preferences should likewise fall between the two extremes. Unfortunately, the political ideology question was not used on the same version of the survey as the illegal immigration item. To make up for the deficiency, an ideological factor analysis is used based on responses to several issues, which the public mood literature suggests are ideologically important. The analysis generates two factor scores relating to fiscal issues that are meaningful on a liberal/conservative scale.

The use of factor analysis to measure salient issues on a liberal/conservative spectrum relies on the public mood literature (Stimson 1991; Best 1999). Respondents were asked, "Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount" on each of the items listed as variables in Table 4. The factor analysis produces results similar to Best's findings (1999) identifying two primary factors, though the present formulation is limited to spending items. The variable loadings do not comport entirely with Best's research, which is most likely due to the unavailability of several key variables relating to social mood: abortion, homosexuality, capital punishment, divorce law, and marijuana. Even so, the variables used in the analysis fit the

criteria for inclusion: “the questions had to tap an attribute on the liberal-conservative spectrum” (Best 1999, 728).¹⁴ The analysis results in two measures of ideology.

Whereas Best (1999) breaks the factor loadings down into spending and social moods, the factor analysis here does not readily fit his framework, as all items have to do with spending. The loadings suggest that the first factor deals with *infrastructural spending* as it pertains to the environment, health, and education. The second factor might be labeled *humanitarian spending* as it relates to welfare, improving the conditions of minorities, and foreign aid. Both ideology factors are positively correlated with party identification.¹⁵

Table 4: Factor Structure of Spending Policy Preferences

Variable	Infrastructural Spending	Humanitarian Spending
Environment	0.555	0.184
Health	0.760	-0.128
Big City Problems	0.402	0.325
Education	0.692	-0.019
Military and Defense	0.197	-0.517
Welfare	0.089	0.661
Improving Conditions of Blacks	0.297	0.530
Foreign Aid	-0.250	0.639
Eigenvalues	2.12	1.19

Source: 2004 General Social Survey

Note: Principal component factor analysis with promax rotation

¹⁴The accompanying footnote states that he relies on contemporary definitions of liberalism/conservatism: “Liberalism is associated with (1) support for the welfare state, (2) racial and sexual equality, (3) and permissiveness” (729).

¹⁵ Infrastructural Spending $r = 0.26$; Humanitarian Spending $r = 0.34$

In addition to key variables, ethnicity, gender, age, and foreign-born status are also included as control variables. The research relies on an ordered logit analysis with the results interpreted in restrictive versus permissive terms with respect to the primary determinants of attitudes towards exclusionary immigration policy.

Models

Four models are analyzed based on the descriptions above. The labels for each model in Table 5 correspond to the dependent variables – the illegal immigration item and the general immigration item. The reason for incorporating four models as opposed to two (legal and illegal immigration) is the data issue regarding political ideology. A substantial number of observations are lost when the ideology factors are introduced (almost two-thirds in both models). For this reason, the data are analyzed using only *Party ID* as the political variable in the first two models. The ideology factors are incorporated in Illegal 2 and General 2. To clarify, the models labeled Illegal 1 and 2 use the illegal immigration item as the dependent variable, while General 1 and 2 use the general immigration item as the dependent variable.

Chapter 5

Results

The results (Table 5) demonstrate a certain level of discrimination in attitudes towards legal and illegal immigration policies. The models are arranged so that comparisons can be made easily between the two policy areas. As a general rule for interpretation with respect to the dependent variables, negative coefficients suggest a preference for more restrictive policies towards immigrants (i.e., “agree strongly” that the US should exclude illegal immigrants and/or levels of immigration should be “reduced a lot”). Conversely, positive coefficients suggest a positive effect on preferences towards immigrant policies (i.e. “disagree strongly” that the US should exclude illegal immigrants and/or levels of immigration should be “increased a lot”). Another important point for interpreting these coefficients as listed in the table is that each set of dummy variables should be interpreted with respect to the dropped case (i.e., in the first model, the findings suggest every region has more restrictive preferences than New England, the dropped region).

Table 5: Ordered Logit Regression of Individual Support for Less Restrictive Immigration Policy

	Illegal 1 (robust s.e.)	General 1 (robust s.e.)	Illegal 2 (robust s.e.)	General 2 (robust s.e.)
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>				
Age	-0.0255** (0.006)	-0.0195** (0.006)	-0.0221** (0.01)	-0.0253** (0.009)
Male	-0.2881* (0.149)	0.0303 (0.152)	-0.1495 (0.252)	-0.1501 (0.267)
Foreign Born	-0.1154 (0.286)	0.4526** (0.227)	-0.9764** (0.459)	0.6375 (0.457)
Black	0.3534 (0.237)	0.4853* (0.261)	0.6462* (0.381)	0.1509 (0.462)
Hispanic	0.5916** (0.278)	0.7874** (0.307)	1.4363** (0.49)	1.5022** (0.452)

<i>Labor Variables</i>				
Low Income	0.3835*	0.0825	0.2607	-0.3093
	(0.218)	(0.212)	(0.383)	(0.32)
Middle Income	0.2885	0.0579	0.2247	0.0844
	(0.186)	(0.16)	(0.282)	(0.262)
Blue Collar	0.0151	-0.0952	-0.1355	-0.0984
	(0.225)	(0.225)	(0.382)	(0.352)
Agricultural/Construction	0.0929	0.4501	0.3367	1.2161**
	(0.267)	(0.313)	(0.455)	(0.468)
Service	-0.1231	-0.0549	-0.4534	-0.1408
	(0.199)	(0.187)	(0.354)	(0.317)
<High School	0.1675	-0.229	0.551	0.0077
	(0.242)	(0.37)	(0.48)	(0.80)
High School	0.0301	-0.3609**	0.4493	-0.1662
	(0.186)	(0.155)	(0.276)	(0.248)
Unemployed	-0.2256	-0.0458	-0.6591	0.5852
	(0.342)	(0.469)	(0.536)	(0.678)
Retired	-0.2949	0.6374**	-0.0631	0.8911*
	(0.273)	(0.309)	(0.411)	(0.539)
Student and Other	-0.2484	0.0782	-0.9515**	-0.2817
	(0.2)	(0.224)	(0.401)	(0.39)
<i>Social Threat</i>				
Threat Factor	-0.6139**	-1.2245**	-0.6582**	-1.1667**
	(0.095)	(0.1)	(0.161)	(0.159)
Hispanic-Threat Interaction	-0.2036	0.0414	0.3548	0.7107**
	(0.343)	(0.232)	(0.527)	(0.288)
<i>Region</i>				
Mid-Atlantic	-1.0298**	-0.1294	-1.6865**	-0.2892
	(0.375)	(0.45)	(0.603)	(0.801)
East North Central	-0.5465	-0.2499	-0.8118	0.0100
	(0.351)	(0.438)	(0.537)	(0.789)
West North Central	-1.4039**	-0.4504	-1.4885**	0.5190
	(0.429)	(0.51)	(0.695)	(0.838)
South Atlantic	-0.9456**	-0.2432	-1.2441**	0.3450
	(0.355)	(0.452)	(0.552)	(0.82)
East South Central	-1.1875**	-0.2824	-1.0052	0.3857
	(0.444)	(0.505)	(0.691)	(0.907)
West South Central	-0.3322	-0.3778	-0.6438	0.3144
	(0.373)	(0.471)	(0.556)	(0.838)
Mountain	-0.6855*	-0.3221	-1.2571*	-0.1659
	(0.409)	(0.473)	(0.701)	(0.827)
Pacific	-0.5554	-0.6409	-1.486**	-0.5647
	(0.372)	(0.463)	(0.587)	(0.808)
<i>Political Characteristics</i>				
7-Point Party ID	-0.139**	-0.0567*	-0.0018	0.0418
	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.061)	(0.062)
Infrastructural Spending	-	-	0.1505	0.0693
			(0.155)	(0.12)
Humanitarian Spending	-	-	-0.5126**	-0.3734**
			(0.145)	(0.135)
Number of Cases	1036	962	416	389
Pseudo R ²	0.09	0.155	0.125	0.163

*p<.1, **p<.05

In every case, older respondents are more likely to exhibit restrictive immigration policy preferences. The foreign-born variable has a notable effect on policy preferences. The coefficients are restrictive in the illegal immigrant models (significant in Illegal 2), but positive in the general immigration models (significant in General 1). One might reasonably expect foreign-born respondents to be sympathetic towards immigration generally, but this expectation is balanced by restrictive preferences toward illegal immigration. The finding suggests that legal immigrants would not necessarily support illegal immigration as it does not benefit those attempting to immigrate legally and may result in a more complicated process for future legal immigrants.

The findings for race and ethnicity comport well with previous studies. As expected, *Hispanic* is significant and positive in every model, which suggests that ethnic and cultural similarities with immigrant groups result in positive preferences for immigration policy. In light of such findings, one might expect that states with proportionally large and politically active Hispanic groups would be most likely to enact laws favorable to immigrants. The lobbying efforts of one group, the National Council of La Raza, exemplify the effect of ethnic affinity on policy positions for this particular issue.

Race is not as demonstrably significant, though the results do conflict with some expectations (Borjas 1999; Rodriguez 1999; Gay 2006). Theories of racial conflict are not confirmed in the analysis. That is, the models do not support the notion that racially defined interests in housing, education, and the labor market will be manifest in negative attitudes towards competing ethnic groups – Hispanic immigrants. Instead, Espenshade and Hempstead's (1996) conclusions are supported and expanded here with respect to illegal immigration. Black is positive in all models and attains significance at the 0.1 level in General 1 and Illegal 2. The

positive relationship may be explained by the shared minority status of the two groups. That is, much like the effect of ethnic affinity seen in the Hispanic variable, there may be a minority affinity at work here as well. Instead of the competitive outlook proposed by Rodriguez (1999) and Borjas (1999), minority circumstances may trump resource competition. Further research into the relationship between blacks and Latinos specifically along the lines of Gay's (2006) analysis of metropolitan neighborhoods and economic dynamics, would be better suited for drawing conclusions as to the animosity or solidarity between the two ethnic groups. As far as the current project is concerned, the conclusion stands that blacks exhibit positive preferences for immigration policy. The results suggest that states with proportionally large and politically active minority populations would enact more favorable immigration policies.

There is no consistent support for the economic hypothesis in any of its component parts. Contrary to expectations, low-skill measures in income, industry, and education for the economically vulnerable do not predict restrictive preferences in most cases. Quite the opposite holds for the low-income coefficients, where positive signs in the first three models (significant at the 0.1 level in Illegal 1) suggest that those making less than \$30,000 favor more permissive immigration policies with respect to high income respondents. The results echo findings by Citrin et al. (1997) and Hood and Morris (1998) that personal economic circumstances do not play a large role in opinion formation on this issue.

The industry variables do not consistently produce the expected effects. The *Service* and *Blue Collar* industries maintain the expected negative effect, though neither is significant in any model. The *Agricultural/Construction* variable is coded according to the U.S. Census industry codes, which do not distinguish among such jobs to the extent that one might separate workers into owners, contractors, and laborers. These groups would certainly be juxtaposed to each other

in terms of theoretical expectations for opposition to immigration. Owners and contractors stand to make a profit off cheaper immigrant labor, while laborers stand to lose opportunities in the face of cheaper labor. The coefficients are positive in every case and significant in General 2. In light of the results, one possible explanation is that the sample included fewer laborers in the industry than owners.

According to the analysis, level of education does not have a significant predictive effect on attitudes towards immigration policies. The results do not reflect the theoretical connection between level of education and labor market competition in every case. The notable finding relates to respondents who completed high school. The signs switch from positive for illegal immigration to negative for general immigration policies. The disparity between legal and illegal immigration preferences may be indicative of perceived labor market threats from immigrants in conjunction with the steady levels of high school graduates in the labor market. In a competitive labor market, constant levels of high school graduates would be at a disadvantage if levels of similarly or better-qualified immigrants were allowed to increase. A 2001 summary of high school completion by the U.S. Department of Education reports that dropout rates have remained relatively constant for non-Hispanic whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders since 1990 (Kaufman et al. 2001, v). As Card (2005) and Passel (2005) demonstrate, illegal immigrants are substantially less likely to have completed high school, which may be reflected in the result that high school graduates do not appear threatened by illegal immigrants.

The cultural and social threat hypothesis is substantiated by findings in every model – perception of threats leads to restrictive immigration preferences. While all coefficients are significant, those regarding general levels of immigration are twice as large as those pertaining to illegal immigration. This suggests that illegal immigrants are not singled out as posing a greater

threat. The interaction term is significant only in General 2 and implies that Hispanics feel less threatened by immigrants, which drastically reduces the negative effect that perceived threats might have on immigration policy preferences. It is surprising that this relationship is not detected in the other models in light of the high percentage of immigrants who are Hispanic. The case for ethnic affinity does not appear to be as strong as hypothesized, though Figures 2.1-4 discussed below illustrate some important differences between Hispanic and white respondents.

The third hypothesis implied systematic differences in opinions with respect to regional immigration trends. The contrast between illegal and general immigration policy items confirms many of the theoretical expectations. Region is only shown to be significant with regard to illegal immigration policy. While all regions exert a negative effect on policy preferences, several regional coefficients for the illegal immigration item are significant while their counterparts in the general immigration item are not. The two regional variables containing the majority of southern states, South Atlantic and East South Central, represent states with high shares of undocumented immigrants as a percentage of foreign born (Passel 2005). The coefficients are significant in Illegal 1 and 2. In light of new settlement trends in Rocky Mountain states, the Mountain region is expected to have similar results. In the Illegal models, that region coefficient is negative and significant at the 0.1 level. The West North Central region is also significant in Illegal 1 and 2, which may be explained by the inclusion of several states with high shares of illegal immigrants (Passel 2005). The one region that does not readily fit the hypothesis is the Mid-Atlantic, comprised of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. New York and New Jersey rank among the top five immigrant destinations and are often denoted as gateway states for immigrants. Respondents in this region are certainly well-adjusted to legal immigration, both historically and currently, but the prospect of increased illegal immigration

may reasonably offend the regional status quo (much like what is seen with the *Foreign Born* variable). With respect to all regional coefficients, the New England region appears to be most receptive towards immigrants in every model. The Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and West North Central regions appear to be the most hostile for illegal immigrants.

Finally, the political component provides an important contrast in the first two models. With respect to illegal immigration, *Party ID* has a negative and significant effect. That is, movement from strong Democrat to strong Republican relates with more restrictive immigration preferences. In terms of Illegal 1 and General 1, the results suggest that illegal immigration is a more salient issue with respect to Party ID – the coefficient attains a higher level of significance in Illegal 1.

Because of the complexity of ordered logit regressions, predicted probabilities are more helpful than coefficients for discussing the substantive significance of the results. The figures presented below provide a clearer image of the conditional relationship between illegal immigration preferences and party identification, with respect to levels of perceived threat. The figures also demonstrate the effects of ethnic affinity on preferences. Figures 2a and 2b plot the probabilities with respect to *Party ID* for the extreme responses to the illegal immigration question used in Illegal 1 for Hispanics. Figures 2c and 2d present the same relationships with respect to white respondents. The probabilities are displayed at three levels of perceived threat.¹⁶

¹⁶The probabilities are derived for the following dummy categories: mean age, male, native born, middle income, agriculture/construction, high school, fulltime employment, and South Atlantic region.

Figure 2a: Predicted Probabilities: Party Identification and Strongly Agree in Illegal 1 (Hispanic)

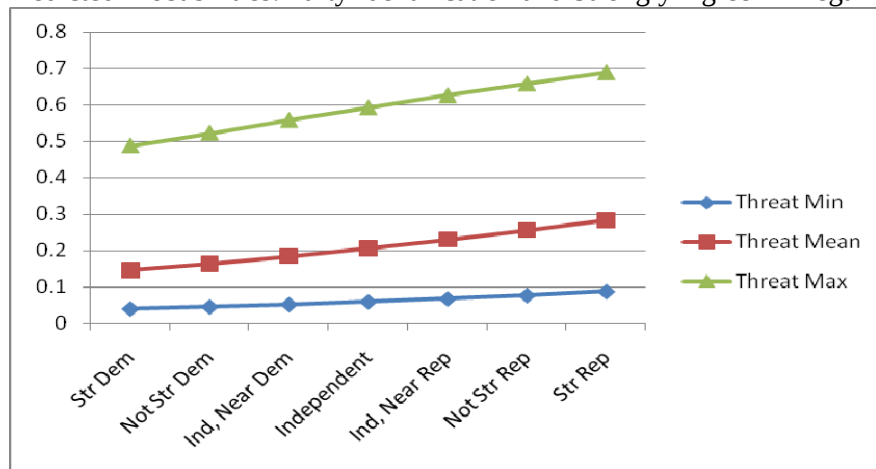


Figure 2b: Predicted Probabilities: Party Identification and Strongly Disagree in Illegal 1 (Hispanic)

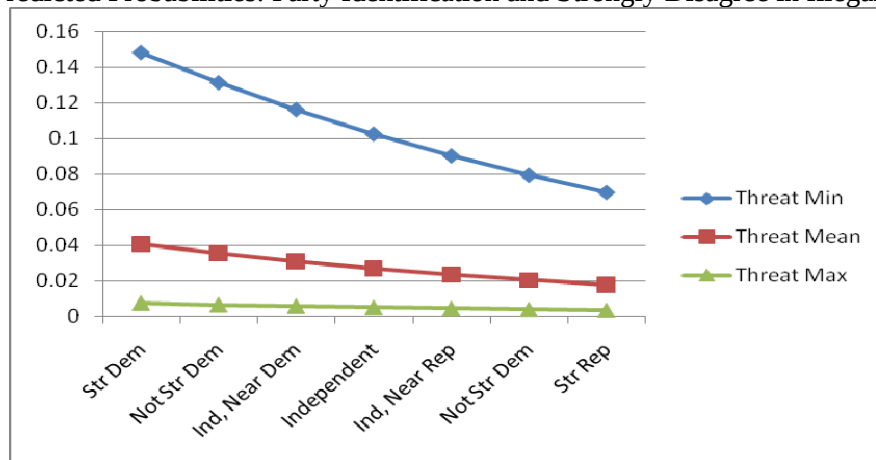


Figure 2c: Predicted Probabilities: Party Identification and Strongly Agree in Illegal 1

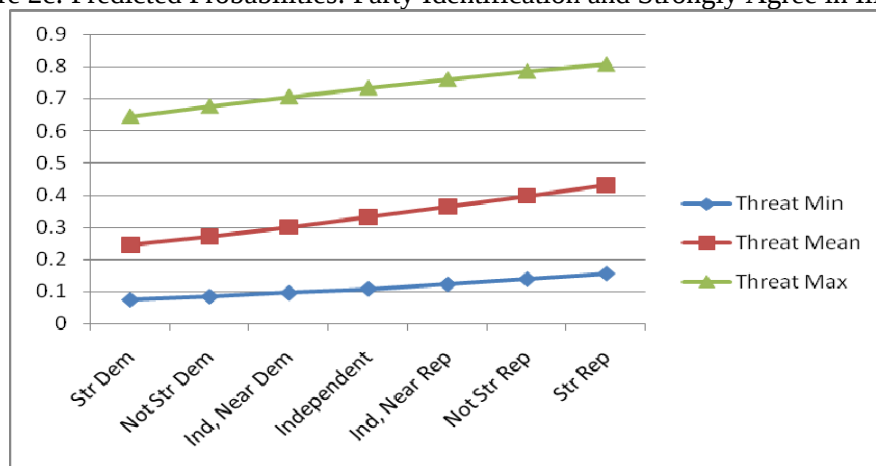
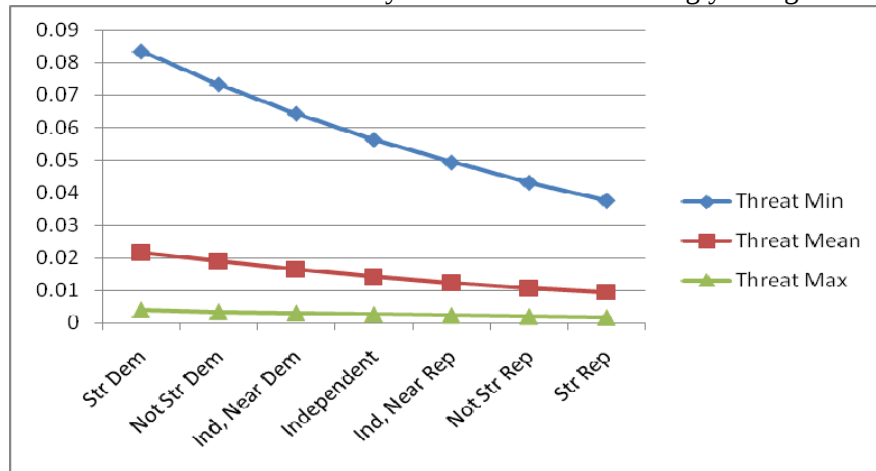


Figure 2d: Predicted Probabilities: Party Identification and Strongly Disagree in Illegal 1



The effect of ethnic affinity is evident when comparing the probabilities in 2a and 2c for agree strongly and 2b and 2d for disagree strongly. The probability of strongly agreeing with more exclusionary policies when the perceived threat is at a maximum is about twelve points higher for white respondents than Hispanic respondents across the party spectrum. The same general pattern holds true for disagree strongly responses.

Confirming the findings of several authors, ideology appears to be a better predictor of immigration policy preferences than party identification, which is demonstrated in the findings for Illegal 2 and General 2. The significance of *Humanitarian Spending* is expected considering the high loadings for spending on welfare, improving the conditions of blacks, and foreign aid. Each of these components might be expected to relate to attitudes towards immigrants. Moreover, the relationship between humanitarian preferences and permissive immigration policies outlined by Card (2005) and discussed in the introduction above is confirmed by these results.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Further Research

Summary of Findings

Illegal immigration is a popular and pressing domestic issue that begs some systematic resolution. With respect to the models presented above, the primary conclusion from this research is that individual preferences vary regarding both legal and illegal immigration policies. Demographic, cultural, economic, regional, and political variables exert different and often juxtaposed effects on opinions regarding the two immigration issues. In light of the tested hypotheses, the finding can be summarized thus:

- H₁: Economic factors such as personal income, industry sector, skill level, and employment status do not factor heavily into preferences for exclusionary immigration policies.
- H₂: Generalized social threats attributed to immigrants substantially influence preferences for exclusionary policy for both legal and illegal immigrants; yet, the size of this effect for general immigration policies is almost twice as large as the effect on illegal immigration policies. The Hispanic-threat interaction only reduces the effect of perceived threats in the case of general immigration policies, but ethnicity is shown to be statistically and substantively important in its own right.
- H₃: Regional settlement trends for undocumented immigrants parallel exclusionary preferences for illegal immigration policy, but these same trends appear to have little effect on preferences towards policies regulating general levels immigration.

Exploring Ethnicity, Legal Status, Ideology, and Regions

This research is an important contribution to the field of immigration research specifically as it relates to projects attempting to address illegal immigration preferences without the benefit of survey items tailored to the particular issue of illegal immigration. Within the discussion of results, several relationships are discussed that might serve as testable hypotheses in their own right. The findings related to foreign-born status, minority populations, and humanitarian outlook beg for more specific analyses exploring the dynamics that underlie the observed policy preferences. Sanchez (2008) touches on these minority dynamics as a precursor to policy reform. The political salience of proposed solutions to the immigration issue, including amnesty and constructing a wall along the border, highlights the need for a greater understanding of individual preferences.

Additionally, the survey analysis clears the way for further investigation regarding current and proposed state and federal policies. Disparities in public opinion on the issue are important for lawmakers to take into consideration when designing and implementing immigration policies at the national, state, and municipal levels. Recent data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (Morse et al. 2008 and 2007; Morse 2008) noted above invites some analysis as to the reasons for differences among states in terms of both levels of activity and content of legislation. The relationships discussed here offer some insight into the content, timing, and feasibility of state immigration legislation. The regional findings, especially, suggest that further research might sort out the underlying contexts that produce disparate preferences for immigration.

Implications for Politics and Public Policy

The debate surrounding immigration reform, particularly with regard to illegal immigration, is fast-becoming a key issue in political campaigns even in the midst of economic and international crises. In the ongoing presidential contest, McCain and Obama's efforts to attract Hispanic voters illustrates as much. In addition to ethnic constituencies, the demonstrated regional preferences to restrict illegal immigration will play an influential role in elections for state and federal offices. This analysis gives important insights as to the shape of regional coalitions and the content of eventual immigration reform legislation. The support for the regional hypothesis above in conjunction with ongoing legislative battles within the states suggests that an acceptable federal policy will not mandate unconditional amnesty or exclusion.

In light of the data presented in Table 2, the most successful policy will likely draw from state innovations and allow for varying implementation as states attempt to meet particular or regional circumstances. A meaningful provision instituting federal reimbursement for expenses incurred by the states in healthcare, education, and law enforcement owing to illegal immigration will be another key element of successful immigration reforms. Similarly, reforms must attempt to sort out the constitutional claim of federal jurisdiction and the reality of localized costs and benefits. The debate over immigration framed as a domestic issue belies the important and often overlooked international component. An illegal immigrant takes the risk of crossing the border and remaining in the U.S. for a reason. If the United States is truly committed to curbing the flow of illegal immigrants, a successful U.S. approach to the issue must respond to domestic needs while addressing the source of the problem at the international level.

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Appendix A: Income and Industry Coding Criteria

Income Variable: Respondent's household income was broken down into three categories based on the Current Population Survey's listing of the "Mean Household Income Received by Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent" (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/h03ar.html>) for 2004. The lowest category was defined as the mean of the second fifth and below (<\$30,000), the middle category ranged from the mean of the second to that of the third (\$30,000-74,999), the highest income category ranged from the third mean and up (>\$75,000).

Industry Variables: The four industry variables were created from the GSS categorization based on the 1980 U.S. Census. Parts of the criteria for each type of industry were borrowed from Haubert and Fussell's (2006) description occupational classifications:

Respondents employed in managerial, professional, and technical positions and sales and administrative support positions were grouped as white-collar workers. Blue-collar workers include respondents in manufacturing occupations (precision, production, craft, and repair workers, equipment operators, fabricators, and other laborers). Service workers include all service providers ranging from highly skilled (but not white-collar) professionals to those in low-skill service jobs, such as protective services, care workers, domestic workers, and consumer services (496).

In addition to these guidelines, I coded a separate category of agricultural and construction jobs to reflect the employment trends among illegal immigrants. The particular codings in Table 5 are based on the Appendix H of the *General Social Survey Codebook* (March 2007, 2226-2232):

Table 6: Industry Variable Codings

	White-Collar	Blue-Collar	Service	Ag/Construction
Industry Code #'s	500-721, 730-740, 812-932	100-392	400-472, 722, 741- 802	10-60

Appendix B: Factor Analysis for Social Threat Variable

The threat variable is a factor score comprised of four survey items regarding the impact of immigrants on society:

- Immcrime – Immigrants increase crime rates
- Immjobs – Immigrants take away jobs
- Immimp – Immigrants improve American society
- Immameco – Immigrants are good for America

Responses are given on a five point scale: (1) agree strongly, (2) agree, (3) neither, (4) disagree, and (5) disagree strongly. Tables 7a-b display the results and loadings from the factor analysis using a promax rotation.

Table 7a: Results from Threat Factor Analysis

	Variance	Proportion
Factor 1	1.78679	1.2340

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(6) = 1253.61$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Number of observations = 1152

Table 7b: Rotated Threat Factor Loadings and Unique Variances

GSS Item	Factor 1	Uniqueness
Immcrime	-0.601	0.6387
Immjobs	-0.6629	0.5606
Immimp	0.6805	0.537
Immameco	0.7232	0.4769